

Exchange Life in Germany

Reasons of Studying as an Exchange Student in Technische Universität Chemnitz

There are many personal benefits of studying abroad, and ways to grow both professionally and personally. In fact, choosing to study abroad can be one of the most enriching, fulfilling, interesting and educationally stimulating experiences of my entire life. I am major in English Study in Sun Yat-sen University, and I learned German as my second language, studying abroad in German will help me a lot in learning and understanding German culture and language. Being surrounded by native speakers affords me the chance to immerse myself in the language, which can expedite my retention and fluency. While studying abroad, I can be given the opportunity to further my academic study in a foreign country and expose myself to the world. Branch out and learn about different places, different cultures and people. Also because I love to travel, so during the time abroad, I can be presented with the opportunity to travel around Germany or neighboring countries and see the world through a new set of eyes.

Stories Before I Came to Germany

Before I came to Germany to study in TUC as an exchange student, I have come here with my friend to be volunteers in Singen, a small town in West Germany. We have built a playground for kids living there. It was an unforgettable experience. And,

of course, we've also traveled around in West Germany.



We made this decision (to be volunteers) far before I knew I can come to study in Chemnitz (I even never dreamed about it), so I was unable to fly and come with other students from SYSU, because the volunteer program was held at the same time. I also missed the language course in TUC in the summer vacation. What's worse, the room I

registered from university was canceled because the person who is in charge of this said that I should give the room to the others who would come earlier, they would need the room more eager than me, and she said that she could order another room for me. And she never e-mailed me again. The thing that made me feel grateful is that one day, my buddy added me on Facebook while I was still very confused and hopeless about the residence, we chatted a lot and I told him my situation, my buddy happened to be a super nice guy, he found many rooms for rented and discussed with me. At the end, he even connected the renter for me and sent me a lot of pictures of the room. So I got a room which is near the city center and live with one Vietnamese boy and one Indian girl now.

Difficulties I Met in Germany

Because of the reason that I had to come to Germany alone, my parents gave me some money from different countries, including New Taiwan dollars, Chinese dollars, Hong Kong dollars and Euro. When I finally arrived at Berlin Hauptbahnhof, I decided to buy a train ticket from Berlin to Chemnitz, and I found out that my purse was stolen! I guessed it was stolen on the bus I had just taken, there were so many people on that bus, and I was taking care of so many packages, so I didn't notice when the tragedy happened quietly. This is the first time I encounter this situation, and I was so panic and depressed that I started to cry in the station. I called my mom instantly

and she was calm and kept comforting me. She called the banks which I had their credit cards in my stolen purse and they freeze the cards. This is the most frightening experience I ever had in my life. Every time when I recall it, I still feel terrified.

The second time I went to Berlin is because that I needed to pick up my friend, she came from Korea and she wanted to travel in Europe, so I took her travel in Germany. Our trip started in Berlin again, a place that gave me nightmare. And this time, it proved itself to be a fully horrible city once again for me. We bought a one day ticket to travel around Berlin; however, my ticket disappeared when the ticket inspector came to us. I couldn't find it at all. At the end, I was fined 60 euros, I felt I was treated as a criminal when he asked me to get off the train and checked my passport. This time I felt devastated and had an emotional breakdown. I think I will never go to Berlin again.

Other stories are about the safety in Germany. I can never forget the day when I visited my friend who lived in the WG near the university. It's was about 7 at night when I arrived the nearest bus station from her WG, I looked around when I got off the bus and saw no one. I walked very fast because I felt it was getting dark at the time. Suddenly, I heard a man shouting at me, saying: "Hey! Are you from China? Hello? Where are you going?" I turned my head around and saw a tall and strong black man walking toward me. I was frightened to death then I started to run. I heard

him shouted at me and said many dirty words. I can't imagine what will happen if I stopped and talked to him.

I and my friends celebrated the New Year in Köln, the fireworks were beautiful but we saw some crazy people throw firecrackers into crowds at the square in front of Köln's Central Station. After the celebration, we went back to the hotel very soon, and the day after, we saw the news saying that during the New Year's Eve celebrations, hundreds of sexual assaults including groping, numerous thefts, and at least five rapes were reported in Germany, mainly in Köln city center. Even few days ago, something bad happened in Chemnitz. The news said a 14-year-old girl was robbed and an 18-year-old boy tried to help her but ended up by hit by the robbers. Sometimes I think since general Chinese girls are shorter and smaller than the foreigners, it indicates that we are much easier to become target. I don't know if the events are related to the refugees (some German say so), but seriously, I feel China and Taiwan are safer than Germany now.

Studying in Technische Universität Chemnitz (Difference between China and Germany)

When I first visited Technische Universität Chemnitz, I am a little bit confused and surprised, because in Sun Yat-sen University or most of the universities in China, we have a certain "university area", where we have a front gate and all the class

buildings are in this block. There are even guards standing in front of the gate. Also in Taiwan, we prefer to have a “university area” for each university. But in Technische Universität Chemnitz, the classroom buildings are just next to the street, which look like many separated schools for me, and the security doesn't seem strong enough. Yet, I witnessed the automation in Germany; we have sensor doors in the university and there are small monitors outside the doors for every classroom, displaying the course's details.

Of course, there are more differences between the university in China and Germany. In Technische Universität Chemnitz, students can hold parties in the Club der Kulturen, and there's a person who is in charge of the party stuffs. It is very special because in China we seldom have parties, not to speak of having someone managing it in college. And I find out that foreigners love parties, they participate not only parties held in the Club der Kulturen but also take part in the parties held by themselves in the dorms, especially Indians. There can be advantages for having parties, for instance, knowing new friends in different majors, relaxing yourself after a tiring study week, learning diversity cultures from attending parties of different topics, dancing with friends and of course, give yourself a good reason to drink! But if you can't restraint yourself, you could get the opposite effect, you may drink too much that you feel ill or couldn't wake up in the next day, and making too many parties can

disturb the other students in the dormitories.



In Sun Yat-sen University, teachers don't have their own office, sometimes they share one room as a relaxing room, and sometimes they just go back to the teacher's dormitory. In contrast, professors in Technische Universität Chemnitz have their own office; even the teaching assistants can have their office room too. And we usually call the people who teach us "teacher" in China, but I notice that in Germany, people pay seriously attention to the title, for example, if we want to write a letter to a professor, we should write down his titles before his name: Dear professor doctor XXX. If you miss one title then it will be very impolite.

There are 4 campuses in Technische Universität Chemnitz, and they located not so far to each other, most of us have to take classes in different campus. We need to take bus to reach the other one. In Sun Yat-sen University, we also have 4 campuses,

but each of them is far from the other one. So normally most of the students take classes in the same campus.

Lectures Schedule

I've heard that Germans are punctual, but it turns out that Germans are also diligent. What makes me so surprised is that the first lecture in Technische Universität Chemnitz begins at 7:30, which is 30 minutes earlier than Sun Yat-sen University. I always think that students in China study so hard that I didn't expect the students in German are also very diligent! Due to the reason that I don't live near the university, I have to get up at 6 when I have the class at 7:30, and most of the time, the earliest classes are taught by Professor Schmied! In Sun Yat-sen University, a lecture takes 90 minutes, but we take a 10 minutes break in the middle of the class, which implies a course only takes 45 minutes. But in Technische Universität Chemnitz, we need to stay in the classroom for 90 minutes without taking any rest. I think although the lengths of the course are the same, but I'd like the Chinese style more, because sometimes we have classes all day, and we might feel tired during the lecture, appropriate break is better for me to refresh.

Students in China and Germany are able to choose the classes for themselves, but the big difference is the amount of the courses that you can "really" choose. In Sun Yat-sen University, some of the courses are chosen for you, you can't even change the

time, so sometimes you can't choose the courses you really like because of the unchangeable lecture schedule. But in Technische Universität Chemnitz, students can arrange most of the courses themselves. Some of my friends didn't organize any classes on Friday, so they have a free day more than me. Personally, I love the independent system in Germany of picking your own lectures by your desire. You can not only choose the courses you are interested in and learn happily, but also plan for your own schedule and have more free time. Furthermore, you are responsible for your choice and learn to be accountable to yourself.

The form of the courses is diverse in Germany. As far as I know, we have seminar, Vorlesung(lecture), Übung(exercise), Praktikum(experimental) and tutorial. The form of the course depends on the major you are in, for example, we don't have Übung and Praktikum course, but my friend who is major in Maschinen Bau have to take all kinds of courses. In China, we don't have so much different form for the courses and actually we don't separate them clearly, and most of the time the so called seminar in China, turns out to be lecture, because students seldom express their opinions publicly and teachers are more likely to teach us instead of discussing with us. For me, I prefer taking seminars in Technische Universität Chemnitz, because I can learn not only from the information professor give me, but also receive more information from my classmates, we can transfer our different opinions and maybe

get a new conclusion. The reaction between professors and students can also make the course more interesting. It reminds me the teaching style in Sun Yat-sen University.

About 30 minutes before the class starts, many students will go to the classroom to do self-study. I remember the first time when I went to my classroom in Sun Yat-sen University, my classmates were all studying, and they read the text book loudly and clearly. I was shocked, because the course would start in almost 30 minutes, and I never seen this in Taiwan before. After the teacher came, she asked us to read the text again. When we finished, she started to explained vocabularies in the text. And she could spend the whole class just to explain the vocabularies. Sometimes, she asked us to explain the sentence or share what the author wanted to tell us, but we always have a “correct answer” at the end. It seems to me that the reaction between teachers and students, or even students to students is not enough in China. By the way, we don't have enough English native teachers in our university, and many courses are taught in Chinese, which I think is very unreasonable for the English major students. But in Technische Universität Chemnitz, all the courses are taught in German or English, it is very international and I think it can improve our English very quickly. Nevertheless, this is just some examples and it doesn't indicate that all the teachers are the same in Sun Yat-sen University. I also met some teachers who are humorous and know how to get along with students, and make the course more attractive.

Students in Technische Universität Chemnitz

One of the advantages of studying in Technische Universität Chemnitz is that you can find students from all over the countries! I see the globalization in the university. I always see people from different countries in classes, and it makes the knowledge without borders. It gives me the chance to understand their culture and their personality as well. In my view, China is still improving in this aspect. We have exchange students in Sun Yat-sen University too, but the percentage of them is not so high. One of my Czech friends told me that the government subsidizes the exchange students in the Europe every month, so they don't need to worry about their living expenses, and many students are very willing to study abroad. But in China, the government gives us no benefits when we study abroad, and sometimes whether you can study abroad depends on the family circumstances, unless you behave excellent and win a scholarship, and then you can go abroad with the money.

The students in Technische Universität Chemnitz are very independent; we don't have an integral class in Europe, which indicates there won't be a class leader who is going to remind you everything; you have to rely on your own. And also because everyone chooses their courses separately, you don't usually take the same courses with your classmates, you need to pay attention in class because in the end of the class, you need to take the exam and it is all about yourself! In Sun Yat-sen

University, everyone belongs to a class, and we will elect class officers every semester.

The class officers include class president, class secretary, class treasurer, activities coordinator and so on. They have their duties to make the class better. They are responsible for informing us important information and reminding us the homework.

In this environment, to be honest, there are advantages and disadvantages. You can have many close friends and these close friends are also your classmate, which is really amazing. There is always somebody reminding us when the important event is coming or when we are going to have the test. But you will never learn to be responsibility to yourself only if you volunteer to be a class leader, and sometimes it is possible to rely on the class leaders so much that you don't know what to do without their warning and reminder.

Classroom and library

There are big classrooms which are for the lectures, and also smaller one for seminar in Technische Universität Chemnitz. My professors love to use projection equipment while they are giving lessons. The equipment is roughly the same as Sun Yat-sen University, and teaches in Sun Yat-sen University like to use monitors and black board while teaching as well.

There are 2 or 3 libraries in Technische Universität Chemnitz, which is different because of the department. The libraries are full of information; you can find almost

everything you need in your paper. And the security is very strict, before you go inside the library, you need to take off your jacket and put it in to the locker with your bag. You can only put the stuff you need into a basket and bring them in to the library. There is also a security door at the entrance and exit to avoid some “careless” students who brings out the book without borrowing. The books in the library are classified, so it is easy to look for the right category. But what about you don’t have so much to time to search in this large library? You just need to log in the university library website, and enter the name of the book you need directly, and you can find all the information on the internet, including the accurate place of the book. The Librarians are also very kind and helpful, if you really can’t find the book you need or can’t understand how to operate the German computer; they are always there to help you.

We have a beautiful and big library in Sun Yat-sen University too. And the books are organized very well. The library is very suitable for students to study or read. There are always many people in the library and the atmosphere there is perfect. I love to stay in the library when I was in the Sun Yat-sen University.

Test

This is the first time I had test in Germany. I spent a lot of time to prepare the test, because I am not sure what the test will be like. And it turns out that the way German having test is very different from the Chinese. In China, the more you recite the more

point you will get. So before the test, the only thing you need to do is reciting all day.

But in Germany, I think professors want us to achieve mastery through a comprehensive. Not only do we need to recite the important concept, we should understand the idea exhaustively and utilize them in the test. Although this is more difficult but I think it is more useful.

In Technische Universität Chemnitz, we have another form of test, which is writing a paper. Again, this is the first time for me to write an academic paper. The professor knew about it, so she gave me a lot of advices. Writing a paper is a really big problem for me. I have no idea where I can find the data, and I don't know the structure of the thesis. What's worse, I can't even decide my topic. So I visited the professor many times and asked her question. She was nice and patient. She taught me how to find the data online or in the library. She also discussed the topic with me and gave me many new ideas and told me what is not necessary in the paper. I passed my thesis at the end with a "barely passed". I think I can do better next time!

Travel

I am a person who loves to travel very much, so I won't let go the chance of traveling around. First, I've been to Dresden and Leipzig, which are the nearest cities from Chemnitz. Dresden is the city that rich with cultural and artistic history. The great operatic composer Wilhelm Wagner produced a number of works here in the

1800s and, today, an independent light opera company keeps the classical art form modern and fresh. And since Dresden also just happens to be set amidst a stunning river landscape, it was so amazing when the sun went down and the river was sparkling. Leipzig is closely connected to classical music; it is a lively City of Music and former home to great composers like Bach, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Wagner. I really love this city, although the way to Leipzig is really winding and makes me uncomfortable. Because of the reason that we have the student card and we don't need to buy the tickets for traveling in Saxony, I and my friends also love to go to Dresden and Leipzig to do some shopping in the weekend.

On October 11th, we went to Weimar. In Weimar, wherever we stopped to look around, there were all culture and history. Famous composers, artists, writers and thinkers are everywhere. Charming alleyways and streets were also appealing and made me feel delightful. I remember that day was the Zwieberfest(Onion festival) in Weimar. The Zwieberfest was established in 1653, and this unusual tradition takes place annually in the onion market. We tried the Zwieberkuchen and the joy fulfilled in everybody's heart. But honestly, I don't like the onion cake so much! We also saw many stalls selling onions. The weather was perfect though. It was a happy and fragrant event.



On Christmas vacation, my friend who is now studying in Korea visited Germany, and I became her guide. Our first destination was Berlin. When I told her we were going to Berlin, the first thing that came to her mind was the most famous landmark – the Brandenburg Gate. This monument has always been the beating heart of a major city bursting with ideas, inspiration, art, culture and creativity. Of course, as a competent guide, I took her to the Weihnachtsmarkt and I did not forget to recommend the Berlin sausage and the Glühwein to her, and she liked them a lot. We

visited almost all the famous spots in Berlin and it impressed me very much.



3 days later, we went to Prague, the most beautiful city in the East Europe.

Prague has a romantic riverside location enhanced by graceful bridges and a magnificent skyline punctuated with medieval church spires. The fairy-tale architecture, memorable classical music, good food and drink (much better than German food), and the consumption is lower than German. That's why this city is the most beautiful and most charming one in the East Europe. Although the weather was not so good those days, we still immersed in his wonderful scenery and we were reluctant to leave this city and ended our trip in the end.



One week later, I took the Flixbus to the Netherlands to meet my other friend who is studying in Amsterdam. This time, she became my personal guide and introduced the city in details. Amsterdam is known as the City of Canals, but I also find old and new side by side on nearly every street, quiet corner were next to streets like neon-lit Kalverstraat, and Red Light ladies strutting by the city's oldest church. My friend told me that XXX symbols we saw all over town are not a mark of the city's triple-X reputation. They're part of Amsterdam's official coat of arm. After

Amsterdam, we also went to Hague. The Hague is Holland's third-largest town. We visited the famous Mauritshuis Museum and the painting "Girl with the pearl earring". This museum is not so big that we can enjoy some very famous paintings in short time. Depends on people, two hours is enough time to see all. Half artists in the museum are really famous, and their works remind me something which I saw before.

I celebrated the New Year with my friend in Köln; the river promenade along the old town was busy and touristy. It was not very big, but very quaint and picturesque. Some of the buildings in this area date from the middle ages but were very colorful and well maintained. There were lots of cafes and bars near the river where we could sit and watch the world go by or just browse the multitude of little shops. The Köln Dom is really the landmark of Cologne. We could see it from almost everywhere in Cologne. This is the second tallest church in the World and largest in Northern Europe. At night, people gathered at the Love Bridge and watched the amazing fireworks. It was really joyful and it is worth to come again.

Food

I am very sure that I don't like German food at all. No matter the food is expensive or cheap, they are not to my liking. The only thing I can barely accept is the white sausage. So I learned to cook by myself. Normally, I like to have rice or noodles with other dishes. After practice several times, I can cook well now and I also invited

my friends to my place to have a big dinner. I am also good at making dumplings and buns, which is actually learned from one of my Chinese friend. He taught me how to make pizza as well, I usually joke on him that he is my master. My roommates are very nice, sometimes we have party in our rooms, and each of us prepares a dish from our countries. I have tried the spring rolls from the Vietnamese boy and the curry rice from the Indian girl. The foods are very local and delicious! I feel so lucky that I can eat so many different foods from other countries.



What I Learn From Study in Germany

First, after studying abroad and experiencing an entirely new culture, I realize how many different people and places there are in the world. With so many different lifestyles and customs, it made me think about how incomprehensibly huge our world is. The second thing I learned while studying abroad was how to communicate across cultures. In today's increasingly global society, it's important to possess the skills to communicate across cultures, learning how to comprehend and convey the right

message is very important. Last but not the least, I learned how to grow independently in a city where I am not familiar with and know only few people. By being independent, I find myself many opportunities I may not have had before. I learned how to cook, how to use the map and explore a new place, I learned how to manage my own finance, I learned how to deal things without others help and be responsible to my behavior and choices.

Being so far from home and study abroad is never an easy task, but if I can overcome difficulties, I know I can gain many valuable experiences and have a lot of progress. I will keep on going and become a better me in the future!